



BALTIMORE



BaltimoreLink Student Outreach Report

The Maryland Department of Transportation
Maryland Transit Administration

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Youth and Student Outreach Report

Introduction

An integral component of the outreach conducted by the Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) since the announcement of BaltimoreLink has been the engagement of Baltimore City's youth and student riders. MDOT MTA serves as the 'school bus service' for Baltimore City Public Schools, and during the school year there are roughly 25,000 student riders on the MDOT MTA transit system daily. To transport youth to schools in Baltimore City, MDOT MTA adds in Supplemental Service during the school year, or additional trips which deviate from the standard routes in order to more directly serve schools. Overall MDOT MTA adds in approximately 200 additional trips of Supplemental Service daily during the school year.

Throughout the network redesign process and after the launch of BaltimoreLink, MDOT MTA has partnered closely with Baltimore City Schools in order to engage youth and students riders. The approach to engaging the youth of Baltimore City was crafted to reach not only the youth and students themselves, but also the families of students and Baltimore City School teachers and staff. To reach students, MDOT MTA focused on in-school training presentations before launch, engaging youth during the summer at summer programs, and reaching youth through social media. To educate families, MDOT MTA focused on back to school events, summer-school activities, various block parties, and existing Baltimore City Schools communication media. To train Baltimore City School staff, MDOT MTA focused on those offices that have frequent engagement with families. Overall, the commencement of the 2017-2018 school year has been approached as the 'second launch' of BaltimoreLink, and the outreach efforts to youth and students are detailed in this report.

OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS



12

Social Media Platforms



100

Events with Students, Families, and/or Staff



150

Transit Ambassadors



200

Supplemental Service Trips



500

Promotional Posters



1,600

Students Engaged at School and Summer Programs



25,000

Student Rider Guides



29,000

Direct Mailings to Households



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Redesigning the Transit Network Together

Partnering with Baltimore City Schools

The MDOT MTA worked closely with Baltimore City Schools to incorporate input from students into the drafting of the redesigned transit network. More specifically, MDOT MTA partnered with executive staff from Operations as well as staff of the Engagement Office, the Office of Partnerships and Volunteers, and the Communications Office. Working in partnership, MDOT MTA created an outreach plan that engaged students, families, and staff of the school system.

Workshops in Schools

For direct conversation with students, the MDOT MTA engaged high schoolers in classrooms and in libraries of Baltimore City Schools. These workshops included a training presentation on BaltimoreLink, a focus on specific proposed route changes in the area, and a discussion structured to give students the opportunity to provide feedback directly to MDOT MTA staff. Throughout the 2016-2017 school year, MDOT MTA staff led BaltimoreLink workshops at the following schools, with multiple workshops taking place during each visit:

- Digital Harbor High School (September 22, 2016; May 22, 2017)
- Benjamin Franklin High School (September 23, 2016)
- Mergenthaler Vocational Technical High School (September 26, 2016)
- Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (September 27, 2016)
- Edmondson-Westside High School (September 27, 2016)
- Frederick Douglass High School (September 28, 2016; May 19, 2017)
- Patterson High School (June 12, 2017)

Associated Student Congress

During the 2016-2017 school year, MDOT MTA staff engaged student leadership through the citywide Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City (ASCBC). The Executive Board of the ASCBC received a presentation on the draft plan for student and youth engagement before the start of the school year and gave input into the finalization of the outreach plan. After the school year started, MDOT MTA staff held workshops with the entire Associated Student Congress in order to receive input on the draft network redesign, and subsequently to prepare for the launch of the finalized network. Throughout the 2016-2017 school year, MDOT MTA staff engaged the Associated Student Congress at the following locations:

- Executive Board of ASCBC at 200 E. North Avenue (August 18, 2016)
- Associated Student Congress at Vivien T. Thomas High School (September 15, 2016)
- Associated Student Congress at 200 E. North Avenue (May 25, 2017)



Back-to-School Nights

In order to engage families of students, the MDOT MTA participated in various Back-to-School Night events during the Fall of the 2016-2017 school year. At these events, the MDOT MTA hosted a BaltimoreLink table and shared information about the draft network redesign, provided updates on the proposed capital projects, and collected comments from families using comment cards. Throughout the 2016-2017 school year, MDOT MTA staff provided BaltimoreLink information to families at the following Back-to-School night events:

- Baltimore City College (September 13, 2016)
- Green Street Academy (September 15, 2016)
- Carver Vocational Technical High School (September 21, 2016)
- Alexander Hamilton Elementary School (September 21, 2016)
- Paul Laurence Dunbar High School (September 22, 2016)

School Choice Fair

To reach students and families from across the entire City of Baltimore, MDOT MTA staff hosted a BaltimoreLink information table at the annual School Choice Fair on December 10, 2016. This city-wide event is an opportunity for students and families to learn about the various middle and high schools that they may consider for the upcoming year. The BaltimoreLink information table was equipped with an oversized system map of the then-proposed network redesign so that students and their families could learn how the students would arrive to school by transit. MDOT MTA is preparing to attend the upcoming School Choice Fair in early 2018.

BaltimoreLink Workshop at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (High School)



BaltimoreLink Information Table at Annual School Choice Fair





Print and Digital Communication

In addition to directly engaging students and families in person, MDOT MTA utilized print and digital communications to provide information. In partnership with Baltimore City Schools, MDOT MTA distributed approximately 500 eye-catching posters to City Schools to raise awareness about BaltimoreLink and to direct viewers to more information (Appendix B). MDOT MTA also partnered with Baltimore City Schools to incorporate BaltimoreLink information in social media posts, the City Schools website, and online newsletters for families and staff. Additionally, Baltimore City Schools sent a mass text-message to families of enrolled students informing recipients of the launch of the BaltimoreLink system and directing to the website (baltimorelink.com) for more information.

Engaging Youth Transit Riders on the System

During the two months leading up to the launch of BaltimoreLink, MDOT MTA deployed Transit Ambassadors both at bus stops and on buses throughout the transit system. Transit Ambassadors engaged transit riders through the BaltimoreLink InfoBus, 'Pop-up' Information Tents, and On-Street Ambassador Teams. The deployment strategy for each of these public engagement efforts included bus routes used by youth to attend school and bus stops and transfer locations with high observed student ridership.

BaltimoreLink InfoBus

The BaltimoreLink Info Bus is a 60-foot articulated local bus that is wrapped with a BaltimoreLink branded vinyl cover and was deployed on the system between April 3 and June 16, 2017. The BaltimoreLink Info Bus carried printed materials, educational boards, and two to three Transit Ambassadors. The Info Bus served as a classroom on wheels, educating riders about changes from their previous route to the new set of BaltimoreLink alignments. The first Info Bus began operation on April 3rd and a second Info Bus began operation on May 8th. Each Info Bus was deployed along one targeted route for seven hours per day, providing free transit service and rider education to all who boarded. Street team members on the bus passed out Rider Guides and Rider Alerts focused on specific route changes. Covering the final two months of the 2016-2017 school year, the InfoBus allowed the Transit Ambassadors to engage students as they traveled to and from school.

- A total of 11,638 passengers were educated about BaltimoreLink through the InfoBus.
- The complete schedule of BaltimoreLink InfoBus can be found in Appendix B of the BaltimoreLink Public Education Report.

'Pop-Up' Information Tent at Charles Center Metro





'Pop-Up' Information Tents

Many of the MDOT MTA's busiest transfer hubs are also critical transfer areas for Baltimore City students traveling to and from school. Inter-modal hubs like Mondawmin, Patapsco, and the Baltimore Arena are high ridership locations where students transfer between the Metro SubwayLink and the Light RailLink and multiple routes of the bus system. For these locations, the MDOT MTA deployed 'Pop-Up' Information Tents where Transit Ambassador teams were equipped with route-specific Rider Alerts and BaltimoreLink schedules for every route in the system. The 'Pop Up' Information Tents were deployed during the 9 weeks before the launch of the BaltimoreLink system, and also during the first 4 weeks of the new system. Covering the final 7 weeks of the 2016-2017 school year, the 'Pop Up' Information Tents allowed Transit Ambassadors to engage students at transfer hubs as they traveled to and from school.

'Pop-Up' Information Tent at Baltimore Arena

- Over 11,000 passengers were educated about BaltimoreLink through the 'Pop Up' Information Tents during the 2016-2016 school year.
- The complete schedule of 'Pop Up' Information Tents can be found in Appendix C of the BaltimoreLink Public Education Report.



Street Teams

Teams of Transit Ambassadors were stationed on-board buses, at bus stops, and also at transfer hubs as Street Teams. Generally operating in teams of two (2), these teams were critical in communicating BaltimoreLink information directly to riders during the eight weeks before and four weeks after BaltimoreLink launched. Street Teams were equipped with tailored materials for distribution depending on their deployment including route-specific Rider Alerts and BaltimoreLink route schedules. Covering the final 5 weeks of the 2016-2017 school year, the Street Teams engaged students at bus stops and on buses as they traveled to and from school.

- Between May 8, 2017 and July 14, 2017, the On-Street Ambassadors reached roughly 80,000 passengers.



Reaching Youth and Families Over the Summer

Partnering with Summer Programs Providers

MDOT MTA built an outreach strategy for youth and families during the Summer of 2017 with input from summer program providers, education advocates, and funders of summer programs. Initial meetings with The Summer Planning Group, as convened by the Family League of Baltimore, led to subsequent contacts with summer programs providers and training presentations directly to youth participants. For YouthWorks, a summer employment program run by the Mayor's Office of Economic Development that places Baltimore City youth at over 500 host employers, MDOT MTA staff engaged host-location staff at the mandatory orientation sessions. Throughout the summer, MDOT MTA staff provided BaltimoreLink information to youth at the following summer programs:

- YouthWorks Orientation (June 1, 14, and 21, 2017)
- Soccer Without Borders (June 1, 2017)
- Upward Bound (June 10, 2017)
- The Club at Collington Square Presentation (June 14, 2017)
- Civic Works (June 16, 2017)
- Urban Alliance of Baltimore (June 16, 2017)
- Stand for Youth (June 17, 2017)
- Faith Baptist Church Christ & Knowledge Camp (June 17, 2017)
- Elev8 Baltimore (July 22, 2017)
- YouthWorks at Maryland Department of Human Resources (June 22, 2017)
- Community Law in Action (June 26, 2017)
- Youth As Resources (June 26, 2017)
- New Horizon (June 27, 2017)
- Bon Secours Community Works (June 27, 2017)
- Catherine's Family and Youth Services (June 27, 2017)
- Academy for College and Career Exploration (June 28, 2017)
- UMB Summer Bioscience Internship Program (June 28, 2017)
- Art at Work (June 30, 2017)
- Jubilee Arts (June 30, 2017)
- Next One Up (July 5, 2017)
- AP Summer Academy (July 10, 2017)
- YouthWorks at Baltimore City Public Schools (July 14, 2017)

BaltimoreLink Information Table at 12th Annual Reservoir Hill Resource Fair





MDOT MTA at Community Events

To reach the families of Baltimore City students over the summer, MDOT MTA staff participated in community events in neighborhoods across the City. In coordination with Baltimore City Schools, the outreach plan prioritized community events that were organized in partnership with neighborhood schools. Over the summer, MDOT MTA staff provided BaltimoreLink information to youth and families at the following community events:

- Community Events:
 - » Security Woodlawn Business Association Family Fun Day (June 17, 2017)
 - » McElderry Park Community Association (June 21, 2017)
 - » City View at McCulloh Homes (July 5, 2017)
 - » Bon Secours Community Works (July 7, 2017)
 - » Union Square Association (July 10, 2017)
 - » Bon Secours Community Forum (July 17, 2017)
 - » Western District Community Relations Council (July 20, 2017)
 - » Greater Gethsemane Community Day (July 22, 2017)
 - » Faith Union Baptist Church Health and Resource Fair (July 29, 2017)
 - » 12th Annual Reservoir Hill Resource Fair (August 5, 2017)
 - » 3rd Annual Community Get Together at Randallstown Community Center (August 11, 2017)
 - » Lakeview Towers Block Party (August 19, 2017)
 - » Baltimore Teachers Union Back to School Event at Church Square (August 19, 2017)
 - » Union Baptist Head Start: Parent Orientation (August 25, 2017)
 - » St. Luke's Methodist Church Community Day (planned, September 2, 2017)
- Mayor's Block Party Locations:
 - » Gilmore Elementary School (July 27, 2017)
 - » City Springs Elementary School (August 22, 2017)
 - » James McHenry Elementary Middle School (August 26, 2017)
- National Night Out Locations (August 1, 2017):
 - » Mondawmin
 - » Herring Run Park
 - » New Towne Association, Owings Mills (Baltimore County)
 - » Goodnow Community Center
 - » Glen Neighborhood Improvement Association

BaltimoreLink Information table at Gilmore Elementary School Summer Block Party





Summer School Students

Many Baltimore City youth relied on BaltimoreLink service to attend summer school. To prepare those students and families for their commute, MDOT MTA staff provided route-specific information at Summer School Registration Sites in Baltimore City. MDOT MTA route experts guided families through the new BaltimoreLink system and distributed printed route schedules, system maps, and Rider Guides explaining how BaltimoreLink routes inherited segments of former bus routes. MDOT MTA staff engaged students and families at the following locations:

- Frederick Douglass High School (June 26, 2017)
- REACH! Partnership School (June 26-27, 2017)
- Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy (June 26, 2017)
- Dunbar High School (June 26-27, 2017)

Gearing Up for the School Year

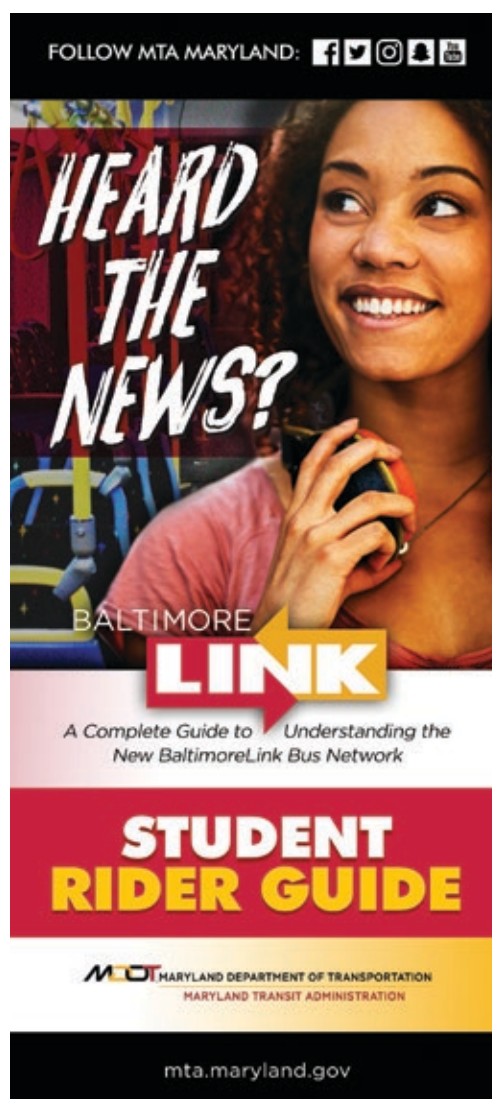
In preparation for the start of the 2017-2018 school year, MDOT MTA built on the lessons learned from the June 18, 2017 launch of the BaltimoreLink system. The outreach plan for the commencement of the 2017-2018 school year was created in collaboration with Baltimore City Schools, and also received feedback from elected officials and advocates, including the City Council President Bernard C. “Jack” Young’s Office of Neighborhood Relations. Overall, the outreach plan approaching the 2017-2018 school year includes utilizing print and digital communications, in-person trainings with Baltimore City Schools staff, engaging students and families at school and community events, and deployment of Transit Ambassadors during the first days of the school year.

Print and Digital Communications

Student Rider Guide

The Student Rider Guide is a critical component to our student outreach (Appendix A). This portable piece of literature outlines how to use transit to attend all of Baltimore City’s public schools. Within the guide, every school is listed in alphabetical order with the nearby routes and any Supplemental Service that may serve that school. There is also information on student passes, guidelines and instructions while on board transit. MDOT MTA is distributing approximately 25,000 copies of the Student Rider Guide.

MDOT MTA Student Rider Guide





Direct Mail Campaign

In an effort to reach every family, a direct mail campaign was coordinated with the support of Baltimore City Schools. The direct mail included a post card that raised awareness about BaltimoreLink and gave direction on where to find additional information (Appendix C). Post Cards were sent to the database of transit-eligible students as provided by Baltimore City Schools, totaling approximately 29,000 households, and helped contact families who may not be reached by online communication or who did not meet MDOT MTA staff at summer events and trainings.

Digital Media

An extensive, targeted social media campaign was conducted across 12 social media platforms utilized by the MDOT MTA, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and others. Additionally, an updated student-oriented website was launched on both mta.maryland.gov/schools and baltimorelink.com providing information on Supplemental Service serving Baltimore City Schools and a digital copy of the Student Rider Guide.

Baltimore City Schools complemented efforts by MDOT MTA through coordination of social media and inclusion of BaltimoreLink information into E-Newsletters, both internal for Baltimore City Schools staff and external for families. Content included information on upcoming events where students and their families could ask one-on-one questions with MDOT MTA staff. Finally, a mass text is planned for all Baltimore City School students prior to the first day of school directing recipients where to find more information about transit service to school.

Trainings at Baltimore City Schools

Baltimore City Schools Staff

BaltimoreLink trainings were prioritized for the offices within Baltimore City Schools that have the most interactions with families. The staff of both the Enrollment Office and the Front Offices of various schools were trained on BaltimoreLink, with a focus on how to best convey printed and digital resources to families. Feedback gathered during staff trainings informed the distribution of printed BaltimoreLink collateral and the strategy for reaching students and families at Baltimore City School facilities over the summer.

- Baltimore City Schools Enrollment Office Staff (June 14, 2017)
- Baltimore City Schools Front Office Staff (June 15, 2017)

School Transfer Sites

Throughout the summer, Baltimore City Schools offers the opportunity for families to request transfers between schools. School transfers are accommodated at the Baltimore City Schools Headquarters and also at two satellite locations. MDOT MTA staff provided BaltimoreLink route information at both satellite School Transfer locations, assisting students and families to understand how they would complete a commute by transit to their prospective new school.

- Harford Heights Elementary School (July 18, 25; August 1, 8, 15, 2017)
- Edmondson-Westside High School (July 18, 25; August 1, 8, 15, 2017)



Student Fares and Supplemental Service

For the 2016-2017 school year, there are modifications to both the student fare media and the formatting of the Supplemental Service brochures. During the end of the summer, MDOT MTA staff conducted trainings for Baltimore City Schools staff responsible specifically for distributing fare passes to students. To maximize awareness of the new Supplemental Service, training on the informational brochures was opened up to various staff at schools, including principals.

- Professional Development Center: Fare Media (August 14-15, 2017)
- Patterson High School (August 29, 2017)
- Forest Park High School (August 29, 2017)

Attendance at Back-to-School Events

Mayor's Back to School Rally

Every year, the Mayor's Back to School Rally is the signature city-wide event for students and families to prepare for the upcoming school year. Hosted by the Mayor, this year's event took place in downtown Baltimore City at the War Memorial Plaza on Saturday, August 5th. MDOT MTA staff participated in the weekend event, providing information on how to take transit to Baltimore City Schools.

Mayor's Back to School Rally



School and Organization-Specific Events

The MDOT MTA coordinated with individual schools and groups to provide trainings on the BaltimoreLink network and routing specific for Baltimore City Schools. While targeting events focused on middle and high school students who more commonly rely on public transit to commute to school, MDOT MTA also staffed events for families with younger students. During the final week of the summer vacation, MDOT MTA is partnering with advocates to host a training event at Frederick Douglass High School that is open to students and families city-wide.

- Vanguard Collegiate Middle School Orientation (August 16-17, 2017)
- Baltimore Teachers Union Back to School Event (August 19, 2017)
- Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle School (August 23, 2017)
- Parent Orientation for Union Baptist Head Start (August 25, 2017)
- Bus System Training Event with in collaboration with Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (August 31, 2017)



Transit Ambassadors

Approximately 150 Transit Ambassadors will be deployed at bus stops throughout Baltimore during the first two days of the 2017-2018 school year helping students get to school using transit. Similar to the week of the June 18, 2017 launch of BaltimoreLink, MDOT staff from various Transportation Business Units are coming together to provide on-street customer service. Transit Ambassadors will distribute Student Rider Guides, Supplemental Service schedules, and assist students one-on-one during their commutes to and from school.

Transit Ambassadors will be stationed in teams of two to three people at high-ridership bus stops located near schools and along routes with Supplemental Service. The highest ridership transfer hubs and inter-modal facilities will be staffed with larger teams. For example, Mondawmin Metro Station will host a 'Pop Up' Information Tent with printed schedules for every route in the system. The deployment plan was created in collaboration with Baltimore City Schools, with further input provided by elected officials, advocates, and bus operators.

Beyond BaltimoreLink – A Continued Partnership

BaltimoreLink has provided a great opportunity for MDOT MTA to strengthen communication with our customers, including Baltimore City School students. Overall, MDOT MTA staff provided BaltimoreLink information at over 100 events with students, families, and Baltimore City Schools staff. Notwithstanding the Community Events over the summer, MDOT MTA staff engaged approximately 1,600 students directly with information about the new BaltimoreLink routes.

With the successful launch of BaltimoreLink, and the commencement of the 2017-2018 school year, MDOT MTA looks forward to building upon this run of youth and student engagement. Moving forward, MDOT MTA commits to having a consistent presence at city-wide events like the annual School Choice Fair and the Mayor's Back to School Rally. Working with staff at Baltimore City Schools, MDOT MTA will continue exploring new and innovative opportunities for students to engage in the process of improving transit in Baltimore. MDOT MTA has employed Baltimore City youth for consecutive summers through the Mayor's YouthWorks program, and will continue to utilize this program to expose young people to professional opportunities in transit. The youth and students in Baltimore City are indicative of a bright future, and MDOT MTA will continue engaging this key cohort of transit riders in our mission to provide safe, efficient, and reliable transit with world class customer service.

CityLink in Service

